

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-25 and 31-56 are pending in this application.

By this Amendment, claim 1 is amended, and claims 31-56 are added.

In particular, claims 1, 31 and 56 recite additional features disclosed in the specification at, for example, Fig. 5; page 12, lines 13-17; and page 31, lines 18-21. Claims 32-55 depend from claim 31, and correspond to claims 2-25, respectively.

Claims 26-30 are canceled in view of the finality of the Restriction Requirement.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-25 under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,708,011 to Nomura et al. ("Nomura"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 is amended, as outlined above, to recite that "each of the image carrying units is disposed separately from one another and is loadable in and unloadable from the mainframe independently from one another." Nomura does not disclose or suggest this feature.

Nomura discloses a device in which four photosensitive members 41K, 41C, 41M and 41Y are constructed in the form of an integral photosensitive member cartridge 40. See Figs. 1 and 2, and column 14, lines 25-36. Nomura discloses that the integral photosensitive member cartridge 40 can be detached from or attached to the device. However, Nomura does not disclose or suggest that each of the four photosensitive members 41K, 41C, 41M and 41Y are independently detachable from the device. Therefore, Nomura does not disclose or suggest an image forming apparatus in which each of the image carrying units is disposed separately from one another and is loadable in and unloadable from the mainframe independently from one another, as recited in claim 1.

For at least the above reason, Nomura does not disclose each and every element recited in claim 1, and claims 2-25 depending therefrom. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-25 under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) is respectfully requested.

Claims 31-55 are patentable over Nomura. As outlined above, independent claim 31 recites an image forming apparatus in which "the developing units and the image carrying units are loadable in and unloadable from the mainframe in horizontal directions opposite with each other." Nomura does not disclose or suggest this feature.

Nomura discloses a device in which a developing device 44 may be detached from the device in a vertical direction. See Fig. 4 and col. 14, lines 59-63. Nomura does not disclose or suggest removing the developing device 44 from the device in a horizontal direction, much less detaching the developing device in the horizontal direction opposite with an image carrying unit.

For at least the above reason, Nomura does not disclose each and every element recited in claim 31, and claims 32-55 depending therefrom. Nomura does not disclose or suggest the subject matter recited in claims 31-55.

Claim 56 is patentable over Nomura at least in view of the patentability of claim 1, from which it depends, as well as for additional features it recites. For example, as discussed above, Nomura does not disclose or suggest an image forming apparatus in which the developing units and the image carrying units are loadable in and unloadable from the mainframe in horizontal directions opposite with each other, as recited in claim 56.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-25 and 31-56 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachment:  
Amendment Transmittal

Date: April 18, 2006

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